

Europe, and now he wants us to believe our economy is performing as if a Western European economy has nothing to do with it.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the challenges facing the young people in America today. As we all know, one of the defining characteristics of Western European economies is the high unemployment rate, particularly among young people and recent college graduates. Sluggish growth and inflexible labor laws are two of the main reasons young people have been locked out of the labor market in those countries literally for years. Today unemployment is above 20 percent among young people in the European Union. In Spain the unemployment rate among people under the age of 25 is a staggering 50 percent.

Some of this is no doubt a result of the European debt crisis, but the more fundamental problem is decades of policies rooted in the same big government vision the President has been busy imposing right here in the United States. It is hardly a coincidence that as President Obama has tried to reshape the United States in the image of Western Europe, our own youth unemployment rate has been stubbornly high. That is what happens when you increase regulations on businesses that hire college graduates. That is what happens when you impose health care mandates on them. That is what happens when you impose new labor rules, such as the one Senator ENZI is leading the charge against this week that makes it even costlier for businesses to hire. We see the long-term effects of these things in Europe, and unless this President changes course we will see the same lack of opportunity for young people right here.

So today the President will bring his latest poll-tested message to the students at the University of North Carolina, and I am sure he will give a very rousing speech full of straw men and villains who stand in the way of their dreams. I am sure he will also express his strong support for things on which all of us already agree. But what he will not talk about is the extent to which the decisions he has made are limiting their opportunities in the years ahead.

Some of them already see this. I mean, you have to think most of these students are sharp enough to put this President's rhetoric up against his record and to conclude that it simply doesn't add up. As the promises of this President's campaign collide with real life, I think young people across the country will realize they got sold a bill of goods. The next time they are promised change, they will know enough to kick the tires first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2012, PART II

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4348) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a multiyear law reauthorizing such programs, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, all after the enacting clause is stricken and the text of S. 1813, as passed by the Senate, is inserted in lieu thereof.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the bill (H.R. 4348), as amended, is passed and the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

Under the previous order, the Senate insists on its amendment, requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair appoints the following conferees on the part of the Senate.

The Acting President pro tempore appointed Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. VITTER, Mr. HATCH, Mr. SHELBY, Mrs. HUTCHISON, and Mr. HOEVEN conferees on the part of the Senate.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1925, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

#### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very pleased with what just happened at the desk. For those who didn't follow it, the majority leader, Senator REID, and Senator MCCONNELL, just named the conferees so we can get moving with the House and settle our differences and move forward with a very important transportation bill.

We all know how hard it has been on the construction industry. We all know the housing crisis has made it very difficult for our construction workers to get work. We all know at the same moment we have had this real problem in the construction industry—where we have well over 1 million construction workers out of work and tens of thousands of businesses that want to do

construction work—70,000 of our bridges are failing, half of our roads are in disrepair, and the American people expect an infrastructure that meets the needs of the strongest economy in the world, our economy.

So I am very pleased with what just happened. I am very pleased we see the continuation over here of bipartisan support for a transportation bill. We have Senator REID working together with Senator MCCONNELL to name the conferees, and we had a unanimous vote in our committee last year on this bill. It has been a very tortured path to get to where we are now because, for some inexplicable reason, the Republicans over in the House have insisted on just going to their own party to reach agreement rather than going to the Democrats so we can have bipartisanship over there. But I am very hopeful, with the naming of these conferees today, the House will now do its job and name conferees. I have been reading in the press that perhaps that will happen tomorrow. So I am very hopeful.

Mr. President, it is 10:20 in the morning on Tuesday, and I want to call attention to the fact we are now on the path we need to be on, starting at this moment, to get to conference. There is no reason we can't do that very soon when so much is at stake.

The Senate bill is a reform bill. There are no earmarks in that bill. That bill is fully paid for. It doesn't add to the deficit. It protects 2 million jobs and creates another 1 million jobs. What good news will it be for this economy to have this bill pass.

I know there are those who predicted this could never happen; that, A, we would never get a bipartisan bill out of our committee, but we did it; that, B, we would never get it to pass on the floor, but we did it with 74 votes; and, C, that the House will never act, and the House actually did act to move to conference. It took them a long time, but we are there. So there is no reason we cannot work together to get this done.

If Senator INHOFE and I can agree, then I think we should be able to get a very strong bill through both Houses. On my committee—the Environment and Public Works Committee, which I am so privileged to chair—we have very conservative members, such as Senators INHOFE and SESSIONS, and very progressive members, such as myself. We have Senator VITTER on the other side and Senator SESSIONS, and on this side we have Senators SANDERS and CARDIN. So we have members who reach the entire ideological spectrum, and if we can all vote for a bill, then this can happen and it will send a great signal to this country.

I thank all the groups that have worked so hard to bring pressure on all of us to keep this moving forward. It starts with a coalition that includes the AFL-CIO and the chamber of commerce. Good for them. They do not always agree, but they agree on this one.